

Unfortunately the available material does not permit a sex-for-sex comparison between the populations of Ceylon and Travancore, though on the face of it Ceylon birds would appear to be somewhat smaller winged. However, the two populations are quite indistinguishable in colour, and in this regard agree with the type of *laetior*.—Eds.]

### 11. ON THE BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER (*MEROPS SUPERCILIOSUS JAVANICUS* HORSF.) IN BOMBAY

In our paper on the 'Birds of Bombay and Salsette', *J.B.N.H.S.* 40, page 169, we recorded this species as a passage migrant around Bombay, but a subsequent re-examination of the two specimens collected in our area disclosed that both of them were in fact immature Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters (*M. s. persicus*). The record was accordingly corrected in the *Journal*—Vol. 45, page 237.

In August 1949 Shamoan Abdulali obtained a male and female at Godhbunder, Salsette Island, which are undoubtedly *javanicus* having blue tails and wings of 128 mm. Subsequent to this I shot another in Thana creek on 9th October 1949 which also had a 128 mm. wing and agreed with them. It appears, therefore, that both forms occur here on passage.

It will be recalled that Littledale obtained *javanicus* nesting along the Mahi River in Gujarat (*J.B.N.H.S.* Vol. 1, page 30).

c/o FAIZ & Co.,

75, ABDUL REHMAN STREET,  
BOMBAY,

HUMAYUN ABDULALI

15th February, 1950.

### 12. OCCURRENCE OF THE CINEREOUS VULTURE (*AEGYPIUS MONACHUS* LINNAEUS) AT AHMEDABAD, NORTH GUJARAT

On Sunday, 25th December 1949, I and Syt. R. G. Kharadi, Hon. Secretary of the Gujarat Natural History Society went on a long outing for bird observation. Near Narol village, 5 miles from Ahmedabad (Milestone: 392 miles 5 furlongs) my attention was attracted by a huge black bird apparently resting at the foot of a cactus hedge in a road-side ditch. We immediately got off our bicycles and cautiously approached the bird. As it did not appear to be disturbed by our presence, we got closer, and to our disappointment found that it was already dead. We examined it closely for blood or injury, but found none. The carcass had not stiffened and there was no stench, showing that the bird was not long dead. From its position at the foot of the hedge, which was on a bank at least 4 feet high, it appeared as though the bird in attempting to pass through a gap in the hedge after scrambling up the sloping bank had collapsed through exhaustion. We examined the carcass perfunctorily and concluded that it was a vulture of some sort. As we were in a hurry, however, we did not collect the bird but left it lying where it was. That very night I

had to leave for Bombay and hence there was no time to look up references for proper identification. In Bombay, next day, I visited the museum to see if I could get a clue to its identity from amongst the fine reference collection of birds belonging to the Bombay Natural History Society, but was disappointed to find their skins of large birds stored away in boxes and not accessible within the short time at my disposal. I, however, could not get the bird out of my mind and after my return to Ahmedabad, took the earliest opportunity (2nd January 1950) to visit the place again in company with Syt. Kharadi. To our surprise and satisfaction we found the bird still there, though now in a piecemeal condition. We collected the wings and legs which were in perfect condition; also the tail detached from the body minus one feather (which was retrieved on a later visit). The breast bone, though picked clean of all flesh, was still intact and we collected that too. The head and neck were found lying at a distance of about 10 yards in a field on the other side of the hedge, still articulated and in perfect condition except for the eyes. The huge expanse of the wings, the round nostrils, extremely wide gape and tail of 12 feathers left no doubt that the bird was a Cinereous Vulture. The grooved underside of the talons was also noted. Though not given in the Fauna or by Donald (*J.B.N.H.S.*, XXV, XXVI), this character is specifically mentioned by Swann in his excellent 'Monograph of the Birds of Prey'. Our identification was further confirmed by the peculiar head, which was not naked or covered with down as in other vultures but had dense black fur-like feathers on top and around the neck which even at a short distance gave the appearance of a feathered head. The remains were taken to Bombay where my identification of the bird as a Cinereous Vulture was corroborated by the Society.

The Ahmedabad bird measured (in mm.) as follows: Wing 770; tail (of 12 feathers) 390; culmen 94; middle toe without claw 116; middle toe with claw 125; hind toe without claw 37; hind toe with claw 74.

As regards its distribution, the Fauna (2nd Edition) says that 'it occurs in winter in the Punjab, Sind, N.W. Province, United Province and as far south as Ahmedabad, Mhow and Saugar.' Ahmedabad is doubtless mentioned on the strength of the single specimen observed by Capt. A. E. Butler in the winter of 1870. (*Stray Feathers*, III: 441). This was the only authentic record of its previous occurrence in Gujarat, Kathiawar or Kutch. Barnes had never met with the bird in any part of North Gujarat. Littledale does not appear to have seen it in South Gujarat. Neither have Palin, Lester or Sálím Ali recorded it from Kutch. Sálím Ali did not come across the bird in his Gujarat surveys. It thus appears that *Aegyþius monachus* has only been recorded twice from North Gujarat where it is no doubt a very rare straggler.

There is one point in connection with this specimen which I would like to mention. When we first examined the bird, we did not find any sign of external injury on its body. Whatever the cause of its death, it was apparently not any physical disability. When we saw it the following week, the chest and back bones had been picked clean of flesh. As all the bones were intact and the ribs still attached to the sternum and vertebra, it may be presumed that the cleaning was done by insects and not by village dogs. The head and neck, of course, were removed to a distance by village dogs but they

were not at all mutilated. Is it a fact, as generally believed, that a vulture is not considered fit for consumption by carnivores—even by its own kind which normally stop at nothing?

GUJARAT NATURAL HISTORY

SOCIETY,

HARI NARAYAN G. ACHARYA

AHMEDABAD,

16th April, 1950.

### 13. A BRIEF SUMMARY ON THE CHUKAR PARTRIDGE IN NEVADA, U. S. AMERICA.

The earliest known introduction of the Chukar Partridge (*Alectoris graeca* sp.) into the United States was in 1893 from Karachi, India; however, it was approximately 1935 before the bird was introduced into Nevada, in hopes that it could establish itself as a favourable upland game species.

From the period of 1935 through 1941 the Nevada State Fish and Game Commission had purchased and distributed approximately 775 chukars throughout the State. These plantings have been supplemented to an unknown extent through releases made by private individuals, and by County Sportsmen projects. Unfortunately, no reliable data concerning these latter releases can be obtained. According to the State Fish and Game the number of failures from the initial introductions appeared to be greater than those which resulted in established populations. By 1947, however, the remaining birds from the initial plant had increased in population sufficiently to warrant a short hunting season, and the resistance of the chukar to hunting pressure has enabled us to have seasons in 1948 and 1949 also.

The state of Nevada contains a preponderance of semi-arid land, broken up by innumerable brush-covered mountains, which seem to offer an excellent environment for the chukar. The part of the state in which the species seems to thrive best is at the higher elevations, where the valley floor is usually above 4,000 feet, and the chukar is especially adaptable to rough, mountainous areas where there are rocky hillsides, or steep tallus slopes, in combination with an available water supply. In addition the chukar seems to thrive well on a diet of our native vegetation, and is doing well in a variety of vegetational types.

Since 1947, the State has purchased an additional 100 birds for distribution, and has also been transplanting wild trapped birds to new areas. In addition, the State also purchased 70 pairs of chukar brood stock in February 1950, in an effort to raise birds which may be planted in areas where there has been no establishment. The pen-reared birds are to be released with wild-trapped birds in hopes that this method will reduce mortality, and provide for a higher rate of establishment.

The chukar is fast becoming one of the sportsmen's favourite game birds in Nevada. It is considerably smaller than our native Sage Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) however, due to the elusive and wary characteristics of the chukar when subject to hunting pressure, and to its excellent table qualities, it is providing the hunter with a great deal of sport.